

Ally skip

A GUIDE TOWARD SOLIDARITY



CHASING
JUSTICE

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We hear the term “ally” often, and it usually refers to a person who wants to support and advocate for people who experience marginalization yet do not experience that marginalization themselves. The true marks of an ally are actions that demonstrate solidarity with the marginalized. Rather than think of an “ally” as a person, it is more accurate to think of doing “allyship” as a verb. We are not an ally, we do allyship alongside the oppressed, the marginalized, and the overlooked.

Furthermore, allyship is an activity that everyone can participate in, even the most marginalized among us. There are so many different forms of oppression to different groups, and each of us experience them differently. We all can learn to be better allies to the people around us who are marginalized in different ways.

Cultivating a life of allyship requires work—internal work, interpersonal work, and communal work.

Ally Ship

INTRODUCTION:

ALLYSHIP IS SOLIDARITY

"Solidarity is belonging to one another through an interconnected struggle that results in collective flourishing." **Sandra Van Opstal**

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." (Romans 12:15-16) NIV

TEACHING:

In order to fully know and understand how to move in solidarity with one another, we need to be present together. We need to immerse ourselves into each other's lives. Become a student of the person with whom you wish to ally. Learn by witnessing their struggles, the things they celebrate, their culture, and their community.

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Romans 12:9-12. How is love in action described?
2. Which actions from this passage are directed toward your internal self, and which ones are directed outwardly, toward others?
3. How does a humble internal posture impact your ability to associate with the lowly and live in harmony?
4. What does it look like to live in harmony with individuals in your community?
5. With whom can you practice solidarity this week as a step toward making it a lifestyle?

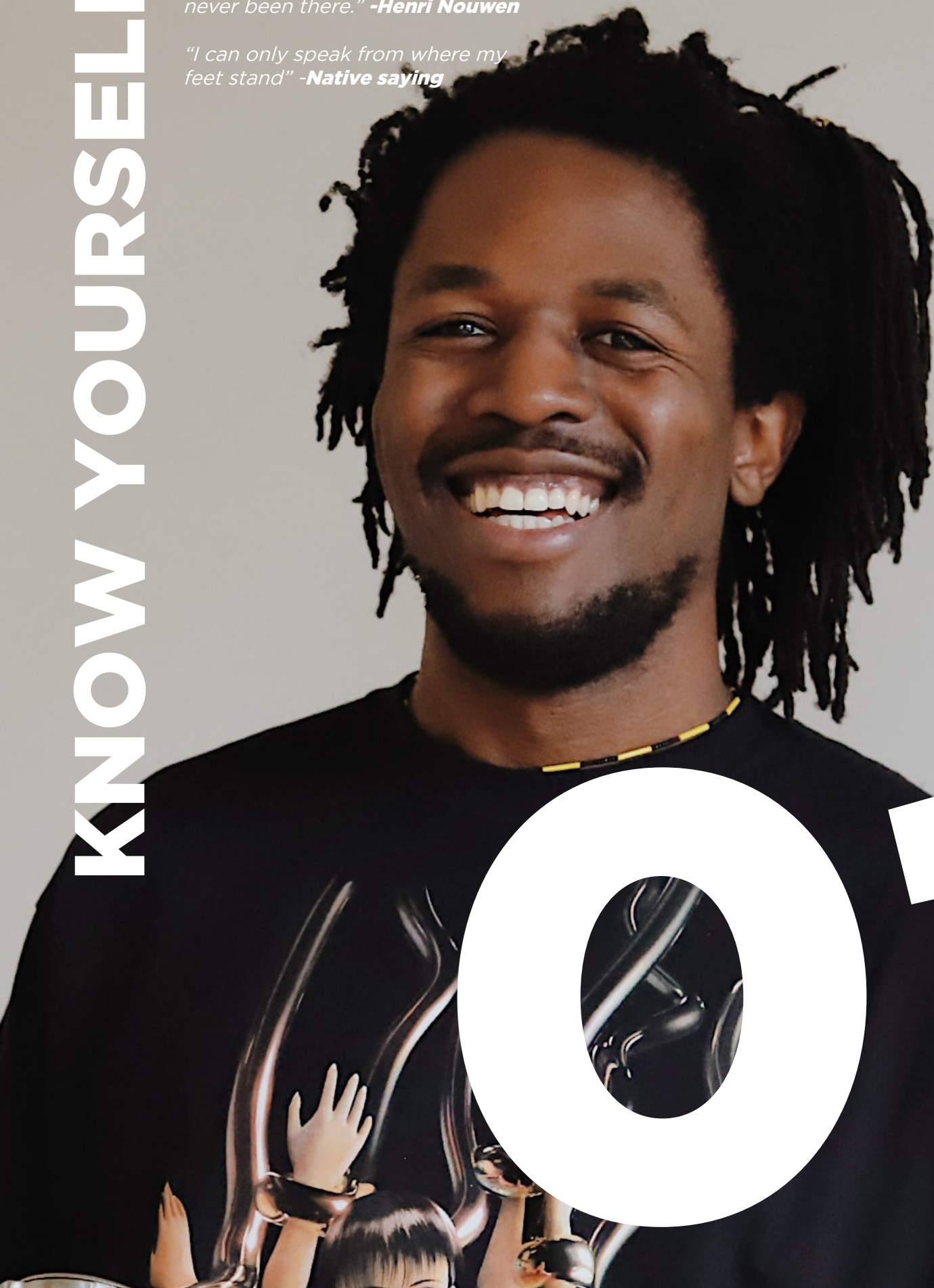
PRAYER:

Father, you command us to be in community with one another; no one is meant to go through life alone. May this time show me how to love others better and give of myself to those who are overlooked and misunderstood.

KNOW YOURSELF:

"The great illusion of leadership is to think that people can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there." -**Henri Nouwen**

"I can only speak from where my feet stand" -**Native saying**



KNOW YOURSELF!

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—God’s good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2) NIV

TEACHING:

Self knowledge is not merely an exercise in addressing our strengths and weaknesses, it is learning to understand where we stand as we see the world. We can only accurately speak from our perspective, which is greatly influenced by our surroundings. Knowing what values, biases, and perspectives we bring into a situation prepares us to understand how we affect others. Developing this awareness of ourselves won’t stop us from making mistakes, but it can help us to learn from them. On the other hand, refusing to accept that we have a limited perspective keeps us from transformation. For example, those who are upwardly mobile need to be careful not to occupy all the space in our communities, maybe the 99% has something to say.

Take these steps to have your mind renewed:

1. Identify your social location. Knowing how your ethnic and cultural values, racial experiences, and socioeconomic realities impact your perspective and is crucial to solidarity.
2. Acknowledge all of your privileges. Understanding and naming the particular privileges you carry can prevent you from harming others and enhance your ability to stand in solidarity with those with whom you wish to ally.
3. Recognize and name your biases. Implicit or unconscious biases are the automatic judgments and associations we hold.
4. Discover yourself in a diverse community. People who don’t share our location are often the best at illuminating our values.
5. Learn to stay in proximity to your own community, without making yourself the exception.

QUESTIONS:

1. What gift have you brought to allyship from your distinct perspective?
2. What biases do you need to surrender in order to be completely transformed and renewed?
3. How have your layers of privilege impacted your allyship?
4. Journal about a time your social location, privilege, and/or bias caused you to build bridges or make a mistake that impacted more than just yourself. Reflect on ways you can apply those lessons in your allyship.

PRACTICE:

In order to fully know and understand how to move in solidarity with one another, we need to know where our feet stand and what our proximity is to others.

KNOW YOURSELF:

Draw a picture of yourself at home and add images, icons or words to describe your location.

- Map out your social circles (work/school, neighborhood, church, virtual friends, family/ancestors). Star places you frequent the most.
- Ask yourself some brave questions: Who is there? Who is missing? All of the same generation, class, or culture? Do you have a proximity to mutuality for spiritual growth?
- Are your spaces creating opportunities for solidarity, belonging, or interconnectedness with marginalized peoples?

PRAYER:

Lord, reveal to me the gaps in my understanding. Renew my thinking and the way I see my siblings who are impacted by injustice and systems of oppression. Give me your eyes to see them as you do.



LISTEN!

"If you stop 'loving your neighbor' when that neighbor mentions the injustices their neighborhood faces, that love is conditional. Because 'loving your neighbor' also means being concerned about the problems the neighborhood faces where your neighbor lives."

-Terence Lester

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BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”
(Philippians 2:3-4) NRSV

TEACHING:

Listening requires you to focus on the other person and receive what is truly being said. **In relationship with people whose background or ethnicity is different from your own:**

- Do some research! Work to educate yourself about the issues that have impacted them.
- After researching and learning what you can, ask informed questions to learn about your friend's lived experience.
- Listen while suspending judgment. Don't dismiss, interrogate, argue, or minimize.
- Practice presence, openness, humility, active listening and curiosity.
- Assume you're wrong in the moment, even before you believe it. You can assess again later, after you fully hear them out.
- Circle back. Check back in. Following up matters.
- Empathize.

QUESTIONS:

1. Reflecting on Philippians 2: How are you tempted to see yourself as better than others?
2. How does selfish ambition show up in your allship? Even good actions can come from a heart compromised by conceit.
3. As you seek to advocate on behalf of others, is your work informed by their actual needs as they express them, or by your own ideas about their needs?
4. Who do you seek out to inform you about experiences of marginalization that is different from yours? How can you advocate for others' rights?

PRACTICE:

Review your social media feeds, your bookshelves, and your social circles. Create a plan to place yourself in a position to listen to people with lived experiences. Follow their lead.

PRAYER:

Lord, I pray for self control when I want to interject and give my opinion or misguided perspective. Fill me with humility so that I may be a better listener, ready to receive my neighbor's experience in order to empathize and value their whole personhood.

SHARE SPACE!

"I wonder how many stifled voices would have a chance to be heard when we assess how much space we take up when it's not always our place to do so."

-Danielle Coke

03

SHARE SPACE!

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (1 Corinthians 12: 21-26) NIV

TEACHING:

The passage in 1 Corinthians 12 never says that there are weaker parts and less honorable parts. Instead it addresses our perception of others. We operate in the world as if some people are less necessary and need our help because of their weakness. The reality is that everyone has agency, and every member of the Body is needed! Just because someone is perceived as weak or less honorable, does not make that true. We must honor the value that is inherent to everyone, respect the gifts they bring to the table, and consider the ways that we need them. If God gives greater honor to the parts that the world has dishonored, then we should, too! When we assume that others are weak and need our help, we push them to the margins of the justice conversation, when we should be putting them at the center and treating them like the experts they are of their own experiences. The body of Christ and our communities at large will flourish when we can recognize and elevate the gifts of every member.

- Center the community members most impacted by the issues for which you are advocating. They are not victims; they are the protagonists and heroes in their own stories.
- Turn the spotlight to the voices that are so often underrepresented, silenced and ignored. Allies don’t take up room or center themselves.
- Give appropriate credit by citing those who are teaching you-in conversation, on social media, etc.
- Speak out, speak up, but don’t speak over. Be aware when yours is not the lead voice in the conversation.
- Stand ready to build bridges to connect marginalized folks with opportunities to make their own path. Ask what is needed and don’t assume that you know someone else’s needs better than they do. People can speak for themselves. There are no “voiceless” - only those who are systemically silenced.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does the impact of injustice and trauma in our own life make it hard to share space?
2. What are some ways we communicate that our community’s issues are more important than others?

SHARE SPACE:

3. What are some ways we communicate that our voice is more valuable than others?

PRACTICE:

Draw a picture of the people you are trying to advocate alongside. Write out or draw symbols of the power they carry with them. How can you make space for them to see their power, how might you encourage an environment of empowerment?

PRAYER:

Lord, each of us is made in your image and fully empowered to work with you towards the flourishing of all people. We pray for parents and aunties who are caring for vulnerable children, that they would see they have agency and a voice. Use us to create environments that encourage empowerment.

LEARN:

"When it comes to pursuing racial awareness and justice, you cannot bypass the work. You have to get uncomfortable. Seek out advice but don't expect advice and services for free. Be willing to pay to learn from other's lived experiences. This is an act of repair."

-Latasha Morrison

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LEARN!

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”
(Luke 6:46-49) NIV

TEACHING:

We must commit to learning as a lifestyle and acknowledge that mistakes are necessary for learning. As you adopt this posture of learning, keep in mind:

- Do your homework. There are [plenty](#) of books, podcasts, and online accounts producing a wealth of information! Prioritize learning from those with lived experiences.
- Injustice does not define those on the margins. Remember that they have a lot to teach on all aspects of life. Look for opportunities to learn from your marginalized friends and neighbors about parenting, cooking, business, and faith.
- Learning activities in real life: consider joining a book club or discussion group on justice and equity led by BIPOC or participating in broader community activities where you know you will be in the minority.
- Finally, we can’t expect marginalized folks to educate us for free. It takes work for them to tell their stories, and we should compensate them appropriately for that work.

QUESTIONS:

1. Name a person who has taught you about the experiences of marginalized communities. How have their words and examples changed your actions (not just your thoughts or words)?
2. What specific steps towards learning could you take this week?

PRACTICE:

Seek out authors, podcasters, or other content creators who have a marginalized experience. Set aside time when you can listen to or read their words without distraction, and approach their stories with an open and curious posture.

PRAYER:

Lord, I want your heart for the oppressed to change me: not just my words or ideas, but my life itself. Shape me more and more in the image of your love for the poor and oppressed, orphans and widows, and immigrants and sojourners.



CHAMPION:

*"Our lives begin to end the day
we become silent about things
that matter."*

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

05

CHAMPION!

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“God defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing”.
(Deuteronomy 10:19) NIV

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves [or are silenced], for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy”. (Proverbs 31:8-9) NIV

TEACHING:

It has been said that a champion is someone who mentions your name in a room full of opportunities. We are all invited into rooms that others are not, and in those spaces, allyship is noticing who isn't invited, raising the concerns they would if they were present, and figuring out how to get them into the room next time.

Remember that there are no voiceless, only those who are systemically silenced. Everyone has a story and something to contribute, but many are kept from sharing or contributing. Allyship makes sure the silenced are heard and that the system is changed to amplify their voices. In her book *Raise Your Voice*, Kathy Khang offers this wisdom about how to approach speaking up:

- Remember that God, the first one to ever speak, gave you the voice you have, including all the many layers of your identity: culture, ethnicity, gender, etc.
- Do your research and know what you want to say before you speak up. And know why you want to say it!
- Imagine and prepare for worst-case scenarios AND best-case scenarios.
- Consider the power dynamics in the space where you plan to speak up.
- Follow up! Saying one thing, one time is not enough.

QUESTIONS:

1. How do we live into the image of God by speaking up for those who are silenced or ignored?
2. What groups get excluded from the spaces where you spend time? What forces prevent them from being included?
3. Is there a time when you chose silence instead of championing someone or some group? What led to those choices, and how could you have acted differently?

PRACTICE:

Think about the spaces where you spend your time and have a voice--your home, workplaces, school settings, churches, friend groups, etc. Ask your friends who are excluded from those spaces what they would say or do in them, and make a plan to represent them well. Commit to ensure you mention marginalized groups or friends in any privileged spaces you access.

CHAMPION!

PRAYER:

Creator, thank you for making us in your image as ones who can speak, like you. We recognize the unique voices you gave to each one of us. Help me to dignify others whose voices are silenced by bringing them with me to places of power. Lord, would you change us all so that we no longer exclude, push aside, or neglect any of the voices you gave to our brothers and sisters.

TAKE ACTION:

"I hope we don't miss the moment to pray, cry, AND act. Because at some point, the weeping must lead to changing." -Tyler Burns

06

TAKE ACTION!

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“By this we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone with earthly possessions sees his brother in need, but withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us love not in word and speech, but in action and truth.” (1 John 3:16-18) Berean Study Bible

TEACHING:

To truly embody allyship, we must move beyond learning and lamenting into living. We must take action. As you consider your location, listen with empathy and decenter yourself. Action must follow. The best actions to take are the ones you learn about from relationships with marginalized friends and community, which will be a myriad of ways to cultivate allyship! So pay attention to your local context-home, workplace, school, church, neighborhood, city, state-and consider these ideas to get started:

- Don't expect BIPOC to educate you for free. Value the time and work it takes for people to tell their story, which is their expertise, and compensate them for it with more than a cup of coffee.
- Search out BIPOC and immigrant-led NGOs and donate to them. Challenge yourself to shift at least half of your giving to BIPOC-led organizations.
- Shop at local businesses led by BIPOC, women, immigrants, and other marginalized groups.
- Advocate for policies or legislation that impact the marginalized communities you're connected to.
- Speak out on social media by sharing, reposting, and elevating the voices of the people you're learning from persevere. Even small changes over time can turn into a lifestyle of allyship.
- Focus on the work with those who share your social location. Solidarity is embodied when we engage those with our shared identity. It is the specific responsibility of white folks to use what they have learned to engage in conversations about racism and xenophobia with other white people. (Find your people!)

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the connection John makes between love and action? How does Jesus' example teach us about how we should love people?
2. What's the connection between withholding compassion and withholding possessions from someone in need? What other choices of inaction do allies have to fight against if they want to show their love?
3. Has anyone ever "loved" you with just words and no action? How did that feel? What does it look like for you to move from "words and speech" to "action and truth" in your allyship? Name one place to start.

TAKE ACTION!

PRACTICE:

Don't stop with learning - turn that knowledge into action. Make a list of three ways that you can live in solidarity with your marginalized neighbors this year. Find an accountability partner to help you stay grounded. Then, get to work!

PRAYER:

Jesus, thank you for laying down your life for me. Forgive me for the times when I have withheld compassion from those in need. Give me the courage and faith to lay down my life for others. As I do, may your love shine brightly through me. I long to see your kingdom come in my community.

ALLYSHIP IS SOLIDARITY

“Valuing reconciliation is not the same as actively engaging in a process that requires commitment and sacrifice.”

“Reconciliation is a journey, not a destination--a marathon, not a one-time event.”

*Both from **Rev. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil***

BIBLICAL CONCEPT:

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.”(1 Corinthians 13: 4-8a) NIV

TEACHING:

Allyship is ultimately an expression of love that prioritizes the well-being of others. In this famous scripture, almost always taken out of its communal context, we are exhorted to consider that our allying actions are worth nothing if not rooted in love. If allyship is just a performance, or if we prioritize our own experience of allyship, especially the moments it is costly-because it is-then we are not loving. The characteristic of this love is reconciliation that is rooted in right-ness. Solidarity requires love that’s expressed over and over.

Love committed to right-ness expects to be confronted and corrected. As we are coming alongside our friends that are socially marginalized, we will make many mistakes. There will be times when our intentions might have been to help but the impact was actually harmful. And we don’t get to define what is or is not harmful. Our intentions do matter, but the impact matters more. If we have developed trust with people from marginalized communities, our friends will exercise the compassion and courage to confront us. Here are some things to consider in your allyship to help it last for the long-haul:

- When confronted, lean in.
- Focus on impact instead of intent.
- Get comfortable being uncomfortable. Expect discomfort.
- Respect other people’s authority and agency.
- Extend grace even when someone’s correction doesn’t feel gracious.
- When corrected, ask for forgiveness.
- When we fail or get called out, apologize and change your actions.

QUESTIONS:

1. In 1 Corinthians, Paul is speaking to a racially and ethnically diverse church in an economically wealthy city, so many people there have power. Which aspect of love in 1 Corinthians 13 most stands out to you as you think about privilege and allyship?
2. Which aspect of love is most often missing in people’s practice of allyship?

CONCLUSION!

PRACTICE:

Take time to reflect on ways people have leaned in when you have confronted them. What did they say or do that helped rebuild trust? Reflect on the last time someone confronted you. Name what was hard about receiving it.

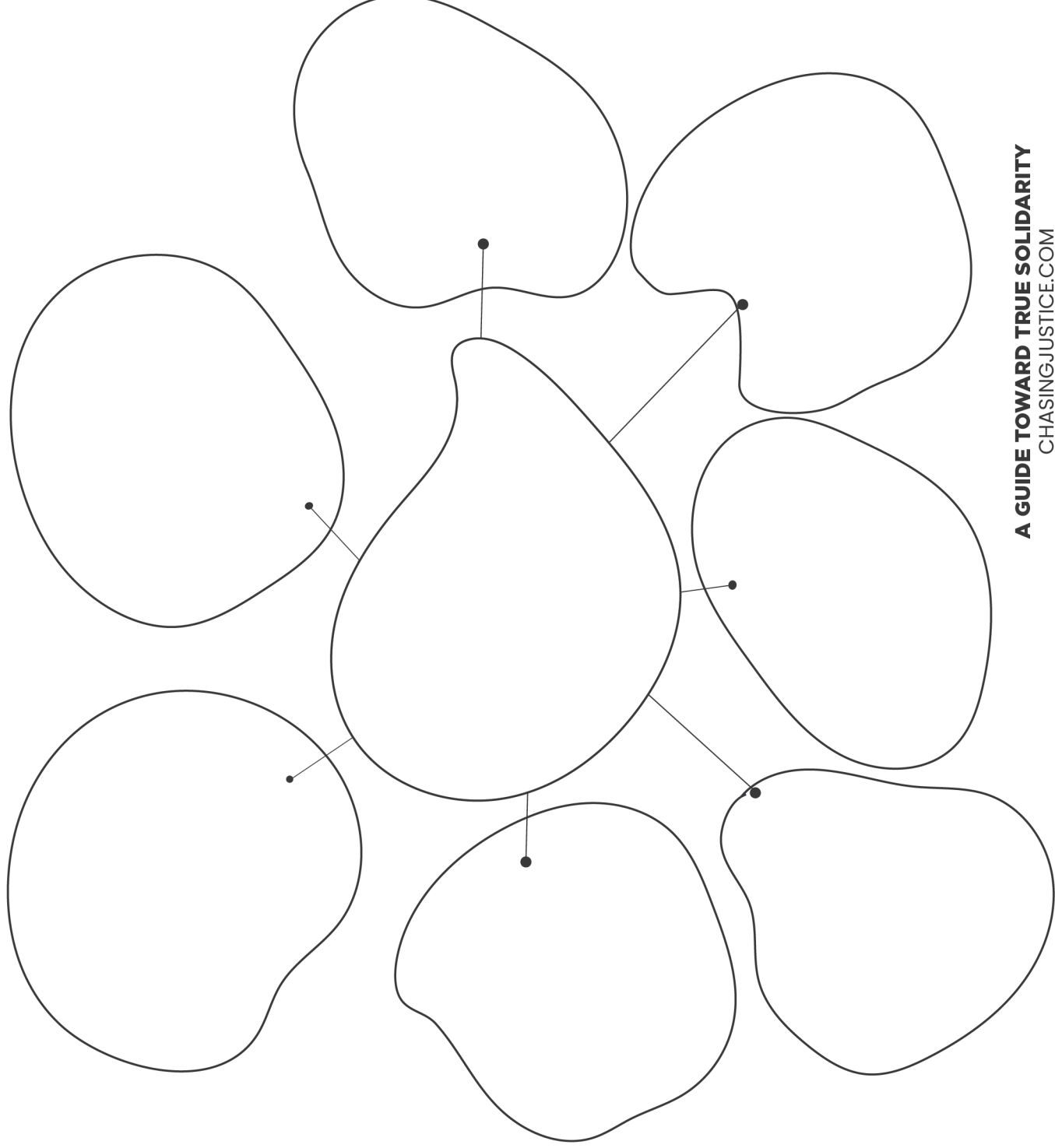
PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for the compassion and courage my friends display when they confront me. May your grace toward me free me to repent of ways I have intentionally or unintentionally harmed the ones I love.

APPENDIX:



KNOW YOURSELF

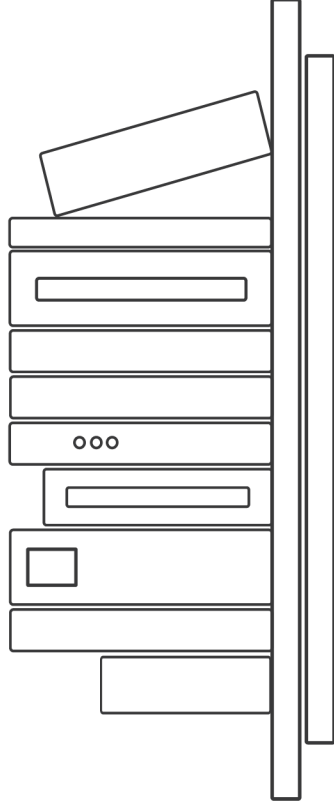


THE PURPOSE OF THIS EXERCISE IS TO EXPLORE WHO IS SUPPORTING YOU AND YOUR LIFESTYLE OF JUSTICE.

- Draw yourself at home. Now make bubbles of certain places or groups. Who are your three strands (family, church, virtual friends, ancestors, small group, peers)? then when you are done spend some time reflecting
- Who is missing? Who is there?
- Are there people you want to be like?
- Do you have deep relationships?
- Do you have a brave space for your spiritual growth?
- Familial line?
- Older or younger mentoring or being mentored?
- All of the same generation? Class?
- Ethnicity?
- Local or virtual
- What are some take aways?
- What words of direction, clarity or encouragement were given to you in your early leadership, by whom on this map, and what was helpful about the way they were given?

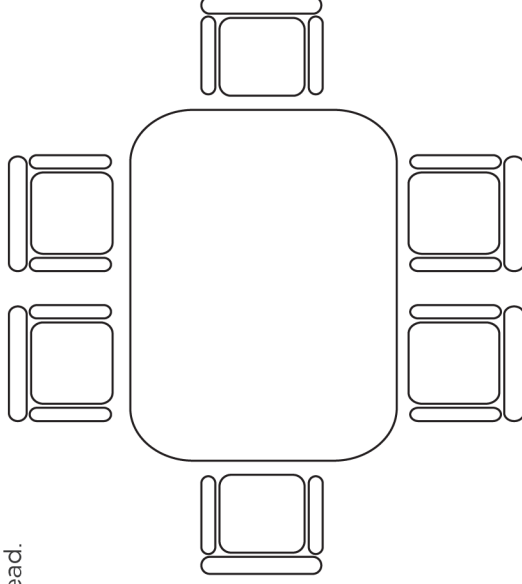
LISTEN & LEARN

LISTENING IS PRACTICED WITH PRESENCE, HUMILITY, AND CURIOSITY. WE
EXCHANGE IDEAS AND PAY ATTENTION TO OTHERS. WE ARE DEEPLY SHAPED
BY THOSE WITH WHOM WE LISTEN AND LEARN.



From whom are you learning?
Write titles or authors of 10 books you read.

To whom am I listening?
What does your podcast library look like?



With whom are you practicing presence?
Who is present with you at the table (write their names)?

SHARE SPACE

DRAW A PICTURE OF THE FRIENDS OR COMMUNITIES YOU ARE OR WOULD LIKE TO ADVOCATE ALONGSIDE. WRITE OUT OR DRAW SYMBOLS OF THE POWER THEY CARRY WITH THEM. HOW CAN YOU MAKE SPACE FOR THEM TO SEE THEIR POWER, HOW MIGHT YOU ENCOURAGE AN ENVIRONMENT OF EMPOWERMENT?

TAKE ACTION

THINK ABOUT THE SPACES WHERE YOU SPEND YOUR TIME AND HAVE A VOICE--YOUR HOME, WORKPLACES, SCHOOL SETTINGS, CHURCHES, FRIEND GROUPS, ETC. ASK YOUR FRIENDS WHO ARE EXCLUDED FROM THOSE SPACES WHAT THEY WOULD SAY OR DO IN THEM, AND MAKE A PLAN TO REPRESENT THEM WELL.

List three ways that you can live in solidarity with marginalized communities.

Name the people who will help you take these steps.

Allyship is ongoing action that demonstrate solidarity-belonging to one another through an interconnected struggle that results in collective flourishing.

Ally Ship



CHASING
JUSTICE